

From Ring to Machine:
The Evolution of Urban Political Reform Language in Gilded Age America

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After the Civil War the United States entered the age of the machine, not only in the realm of industry, but in politics as well. The two major parties developed elaborate organizations, their ideological commitments diminished, and they became more thoroughly entrenched in power. These developments were especially evident in cities, where professional politicians mobilized working-class and immigrant voters to create formidable party operations. Reformers labeled these organizations “machines,” a derisive metaphor that evoked a broad set of meanings in an age of rapid industrialization. Exploring the origins and use of that term can help us understand a broader shift in the prevailing conception of how American democracy worked.

The significance of the rise of the machine metaphor becomes clear when we compare it to its predecessor. During the late 1860s and early 1870s, as the Civil-War-era ideological commitments of the two major parties faded and as a series of scandals erupted, reformers initially expressed their concern over the corrupting force of “rings.” That term suggested an explanation of political corruption consistent with a traditional republican framework pitting selfish interests against the public good. “Machine” implied a more complex, powerful, and permanent entity. It invited more systematic explanations of the sources and character of political institutions and processes, an impulse consistent with the rising cultural authority of social scientific analysis.

The shift from ring to machine signaled a changing explanation of political corruption, one with ironic consequences. The republican fear of faction and the concomitant emphasis on moral consensus that lay at the heart of the pre-Civil War antiparty and reform rhetoric proved inadequate for explaining the sources and possible remedies for the dishonesty and fraud evident in postwar politics. A new critique fed by Darwinian social science arose during the 1870s and 1880s. It presented the corrupt party politics of the Gilded Age as a product of social evolution and linked this style of politics to the working class and to specific racial groups. Although it rejected the validity of these alternative forms of group based politics, this new critique implicitly acknowledged the multiple sources of political morality active in American public life—inadvertantly furthering the perception of a plural society upon which machine politics rested.

The chief authors of this new analysis were the liberal reformers we remember as “mugwumps.” Mugwump was the derisive term coined to describe a small set of wealthy Republicans whose dissatisfaction with party politics intensified during the 1870s and 1880s and culminated in their endorsement of Democratic presidential candidate Grover Cleveland in 1884. Spoilsman James Blaine dismissed them as “noisy but not numerous,” a judgment echoed by several generations of historians. But recent research has suggested that the noise they made in the pages of magazines and newspapers and in various lobbying efforts mattered. This diverse body of scholarship portrays mugwumps as a well-positioned interest group that helped shape modern American political culture.¹ It has returned liberal reformers, if not to center stage, then to a place of importance in the political history of Gilded Age America.

Though a welcome corrective, recent work on Mugwumps would benefit from a stronger sense of irony. In the arena of political reform, their rhetoric and ideas generated unexpected results. By developing the image of the political machine and offering a social rather than simply a moral explanation how it worked, liberal reformers unintentionally gave credence to the idea that politics was a clash of groups rather than the high-minded pursuit of the public good. As Mugwumps acknowledged this change and acted upon it, they unintentionally fueled a redefinition of American politics that made the machine idea more palatable. Tracing the evolution of Gilded Age political reform rhetoric sheds light on how they did so.

When Americans spoke of political corruption during the era of Reconstruction, they most often spoke of rings. Every scandal seemed to have a ring behind it: the Whiskey Ring, the Erie Ring, the Customs House Ring, and the Washington Ring were but examples of a pervasive conspiratorial greed and dishonesty that critics feared was undermining American democracy. Complaints of ring rule arose in many urban settings as well. Reformers in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities warned of cliques threatening the civic health of their communities, the most infamous of them New York's Tweed Ring.²

The choice of words was significant. "Ring" located the source of political corruption in the dishonesty and wrongdoing of a small, semisecret circle of men. Rings were not complex party organizations but rather "knots" of men who manipulated the political process to enrich themselves. "A 'ring' is, in its common form," explained the Nation, "a small number of persons who get possession of an administrative machine and

distribute the offices or other good things connected with it among a band of fellows, of greater or less dimensions, who agree to divide them whatever they take.” That the word could be used to describe criminals with no connection to politics underscored its political meaning. It evoked a conspiracy to rob the public, a word roughly interchangeable with clique or gang, and it explained corruption as an outgrowth of moral failure, the product of greed.³

In offering a moral explanation of political wrongdoing, critics of “rings” created an image that fit comfortably within the rhetorical framework of republicanism. Republicanism’s concern for civic virtue—disinterested service to the common good—and its definition of corruption as the selfish pursuit of power and wealth at the expense of the common weal remained a staple of the American reform vocabulary long after the visions of an agrarian republic that shaped it had faded. Attacks against “rings” portrayed political wrongdoing in similar terms, as the work of grasping politicians with no concern for the well being of the public. “The general good alone had no voice, for it had no ring,” Henry Adams complained in an 1869 lament that summed up the tension between the selfish politics of the day and traditional concern for civic virtue. The term broke with classical republicanism’s emphasis on the selfish pursuit of power, stressing instead the perpetrators’ lust for wealth. But it continued to pit individual selfishness against the common good in its explanation of corruption.⁴

Not surprisingly, alarm about “ring rule” was particularly acute in cities. Urban heterogeneity directly challenged and ultimately undercut republican notions of consensual politics. In New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, Buffalo, Chicago, Boston and other large urban settings, party politics grew increasingly group-oriented and

conflict-ridden. Big-city politicians such as William M. Tweed and his Tammany predecessor Fernando Wood or Philadelphia Republicans James McManes and William Stokely were not gentlemen commanding deference but skilled manipulators of popular passions and interests. In attempting to describe this new politics and mobilize popular opposition to it, reformers offered an indictment built upon visions of individual moral culpability. In the setting where the traditional ideals of republican politics were most at risk, the term ring was particularly resonant.

New York City's Tweed Ring was the quintessential urban ring. William Magear Tweed, Richard Connolly, Peter Barr Sweeny and Mayor Abraham Oakey Hall, working with a handful of supporters, constituted the ring. Though often described as the first urban political machine, Tweed and his confederates are better seen as a faction within the Democratic Party. They controlled Tammany Hall, one of several organizations vying for power within New York City's Democracy. From 1866 to 1871, Tammany dominated the local party, giving the Tweed Ring control of city government and a fair amount influence at the state level. During their time in power all four ring members grew rich from the kickbacks and bribes that flowed their way. By one estimate they stole \$6,312,541.37 from the city in 1870 alone. A series of exposes by the New York Times in July 1871 documenting the Ring's massive fraud triggered an anti-Tammany crusade that ultimately removed Tweed and his confederates from power.⁵

A close examination of the representations used during the anti-Tweed campaign reveals the republican framework embedded in indictments of "rings." Coverage in the Times, which spearheaded the opposition, depicted the scandal as a case of individual wrongdoing by a handful of men, a theme echoed by other New York newspapers.

Harper's Weekly cartoonist Thomas Nast brought the Ring to national attention through his art, depicting ring members in similar terms and pitting them against a united public.

The dominant motif in the Times' coverage was criminality. The paper peppered its coverage with references to theft and fraud. When Tweed and his allies insisted on their innocence prior to the most damning revelations and demanded proof, the Times compared them to "a gang of burglars." In the midst of the most powerful revelations, the paper charged that the "Tammany gang" was guilty of "robbing the public in a more audacious manner than ever." The Ring had undertaken "the gigantic robbery of the city;" its members were "municipal thieves" who had conducted "schemes of plunder," "frauds," and "swindles." Denying it had political motives, the paper insisted of Mayor Hall, "we call him a thief because we can prove him to be one." Even Tammany's supporters came largely from the ranks of the city's "most inveterate criminals, roughs, [and] thieves" What the paper presented to its readers was a case of theft in which the victim was the city or "the public" and the perpetrators were a specific group of individuals.⁶

Such a critique also echoed the traditional republican fear of faction. In several instances the Times specifically labeled the Ring a "corrupt faction." Like the placeman their eighteenth-century forebears feared, the paper saw the Tweed Ring engaged in a "conspiracy against the public" which had to be checked through the consensual action of the entire community. When the Ring was defeated at the polls in November, it exulted that "the voice of the people is supreme" and that while their moral principles "may be momentarily stifled by dishonest factions," they would ultimately triumph. The Times' analysis was not simply the application of an inherited ideology. It stressed greed as the

Ring's motivation, a departure from classical republicanism's concern about the accumulation of power in the hands of a few men. But republican rhetoric remained the dominant vocabulary of political reform.⁷

In the infrequent instances when the Times moved beyond its emphasis on individual culpability to offer social explanations of the Ring's power it did so obliquely. The paper's obsession with the criminality of Tweed and his allies also had class implications, placing them outside the bounds of middle-class respectability. It occasionally noted the class origins of the Ring's support as well, which it claimed came from the "lowest dregs of our population." And the Times made periodic references to the need for "taxpayers"—which meant property holders at a time when assessment of real estate was the primary form of taxation—to organize against the Ring. The violence and upheaval of the Paris Commune also lurked in the background. Although the event occurred during the spring before the Tweed scandal broke, the coverage of it in American magazines and newspapers persisted into the summer and the Times implied that ring rule might unleash similar forces in New York.⁸

Ethnicity sporadically entered the paper's analysis of the Ring's power as well. Of particular significance among Ring backers were ignorant immigrants, most notably the "Irish rabble" who had poured into the city over the previous three decades. The Ring's failure to contain the "Orange Riot," a clash between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants on July 12th, led some to attack it as a tool of Irish Catholic interests just as the Times accelerated its offensive against the Ring. Although the paper insisted respectable Irish did not support the Ring, the context of its commentary, and its attacks on Tweed and Mayor Hall for supporting the Irish rioters framed the discussion of the

political situation. It also published a special supplemental edition of the paper summarizing its Tweed investigation in both English and German, another tacit acknowledgement of the plural character of its audience. But discussions of the voters who put the Ring in power were uncommon and neither class- nor ethnically driven interpretations of the scandal were explored in depth in the paper's revelations. The emphasis remained on the thefts themselves and the culpability of a handful of men, a depiction consistent with republican explanations of corruption rooted in the dishonesty of Tammany leaders and a lack of civic virtue among the people as a whole.⁹

As the Times' sporadic stabs at social analysis suggest, the republican-tinged vision of a handful of selfish men grabbing power and wealth at the expense of the common good was difficult to sustain. The paper was conscious of the class and ethnic dimensions of the Ring's support, but it lacked the language necessary to interpret the scandal in social terms. Explaining the origins and power of the Tweed Ring as a product of class or ethnic differences was not possible because to do so required abandoning the rhetorical ideal of a consensual body politic. That ingrained vision, a republican inheritance, remained a powerful force shaping the paper's understanding of what Tweed and his partners had done and how they would be defeated.¹⁰

The Times' exposes brought the Tweed Ring national attention, but it was the art of Thomas Nast that had the widest and most enduring impact. The cartoonist for Harper's Weekly, the preeminent middle-class magazine of the age, Nast's scathing caricatures of Tweed and his allies remain among the most famous and powerful examples of political cartooning in American history. Long critical of Democratic rule in New York City, Nast seized on the Times' revelations as the basis for a series of

devastating cartoons that played a central role in defeating the Ring. The Nation noted that it was “hardly possible to award too much praise” to Nast for his anti-Tammany work, which “brought the rascalities of the Ring home to hundreds of thousands who never would have looked at the figures and printed denunciations.” Nast not only helped destroy the Ring, his caricatures of Tweed carved a place for themselves in the American political imagination as the classic image of the urban party boss.¹¹

Like the Times, Nast conceived of the Tweed scandal within a framework of republican ideology. His most famous Tweed cartoon, “The Tammany Tiger Loose” [fig. 1] used a Christians and Lions motif to depict a ferocious beast attacking the prostrate feminine image of the Republic, with a shattered ballot box and a broken sword lying nearby. Tweed and his henchmen looked on from the emperor’s box, underscoring the illegitimate and undemocratic nature of their power. After the defeat of the Ring in November, 1871 Tweed marked the triumph with a similar image of the Republic, shield in hand, triumphantly displaying a ballot box that had crushed Tweed, Hall, and Sweeny [Fig 2]. Broad­sides announced “Victory for the Republic” and “Down with Corruption” while images of the Pope and other aristocratic European leaders looked on, surprised and dismayed. In both cartoons the Tweed issue was presented as a clash between the corrupt, monarchical tendencies of the Ring’s leaders and the Republic—a singular entity that represented the interests of people as a whole.

Although Nast emphasized the disreputability of ring members, the class implications of his cartoons were muted. Tweed, Sweeny, Connolly, and Hall were distinctive characters in his art, not archetypes representing specific social classes, and the predatory actions of the Ring were the work of individuals. When he juxtaposed the



Fig. 1 [Source: J. Chal Vinson, Thomas Nast: Political Cartoonist (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), Image 52.]

Ring's avarice with the plight of working-class rent payers, he echoed the defensive claims of the speechmakers at the opening meeting of the Committee of Seventy, who insisted that the movement against the Ring had the backing of both rich and poor. Workmen are portrayed sympathetically, with upright stature and respectable dress (fig. 3). Only in rare instances did Nast betray fears of a working-class revolt. In one anti-Ring cartoon published before the Times revelations he linked the Ring to the Paris Commune, a connection he dropped from subsequent work. Otherwise, his visual assault on the Ring pitted a united public against the corrupt actions of a specific set of greedy and corrupt men.¹²

The more powerful strain in Nast's art was racial. He invariably depicted Irish immigrants in simian terms, a conventional device in mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American art. Although such images dominated his cartoons about religious and educational issues, they were marginal to his indictment of Tweed and his allies. Tweed

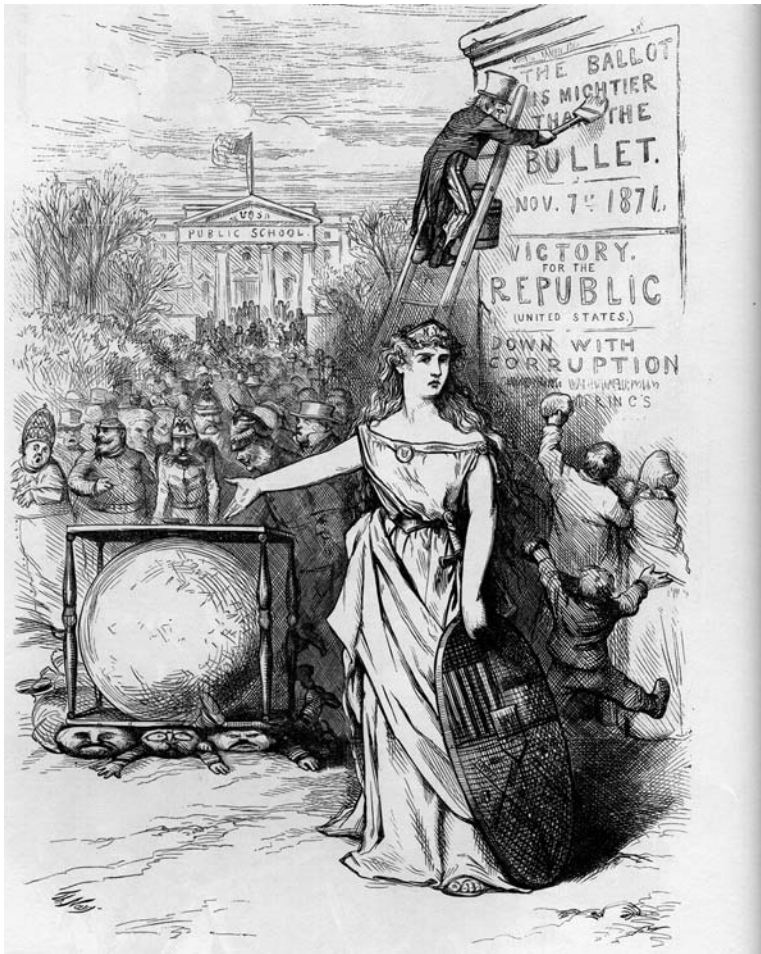


Fig. 2 [Source: Morton Keller, The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), Image 129, p. 204.]

was Scotch Presbyterian, but both Connolly and Sweeny were Irish. Yet Nast caricatured them in individualized ways with no reference to Irish racial features. In a few instances, ape-like Irish figures appear in Nast's anti-Tammany art, but they were rarely featured and more often were secondary elements in cartoons that emphasize the images of Tweed and the others. His depictions of the working-class are clearly white [fig. 3]. The blame, in Nast's presentation, rested primarily with the handful of men who constituted the Ring rather than a particular class or group of people.

Lacking the ideological arsenal necessary for a social analysis, reformers and critics of the Ring saw Tammany rule and the 1871 scandal primarily through a republican lens. The Ring, run by a handful of greedy, dishonest men, had seized power

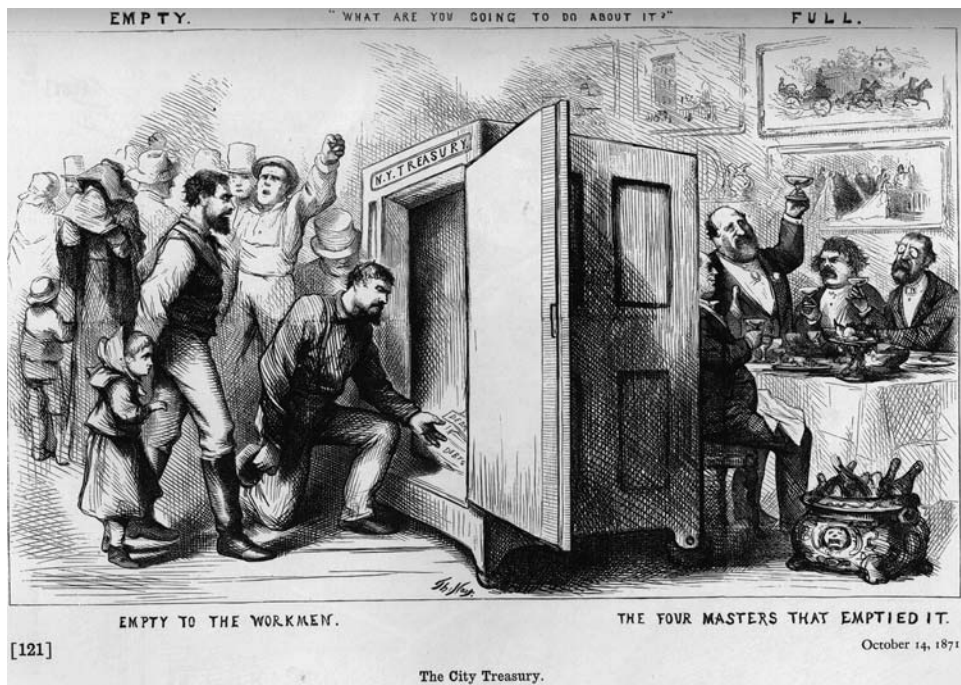


Fig. 3 [Source: Keller, Art and Politics of Thomas Nast, 197, Image 121]

and threatened republican government. Its opponents presented their effort as collective and consensual and called Tammany's defeat the triumph of the people. But the campaign against the Tweed Ring would be the last hurrah for this vision of urban politics. By the mid 1870s, the term ring was declining in use and significance. The image of a small clique conspiring to undermine the public good for selfish ends was not an effective symbol for the complex organizational politics that had taken root by the end of Reconstruction. The word never entirely disappeared from the American political lexicon. But the less ideological political style that had taken shape both nationally and in cities by the late 1870s demanded a new term, one suited to the increasing complexity and power of party organizations.

The rise of the term machine as a dominant metaphor for American party organizations—particularly those in urban settings—signaled a shift in thinking about the sources and character of political corruption. By the late 1870s, critics of the major

parties routinely referred to “machine politicians” and wrote increasingly of the need to curtail the power of “political machines.” In an age of rapid industrialization, the image of the machine was especially evocative, summoning forth images of power, efficiency, and the mindless obedience of working-class voters to the demands of the boss. Its complexity encouraged analyses of political corruption that went well beyond the suggestion of criminality embedded in attacks on rings. The class implications of the term also fueled social explanations of political behavior that ultimately linked the organizational style of politics to specific classes and racial groups and helped Americans reimagine politics as social conflict.

It is hardly surprising that the machine should become a metaphor for Gilded Age parties. One of the major cultural processes of the nineteenth century was the response of Americans to the increasing presence of machinery in their daily lives, in the form of factory work, streetcars, and mass produced goods. Machines quickly developed into a complex and highly contested symbol through which both Americans and Europeans expressed a range of responses to rapid industrialization. Political reformers found it an evocative image that enabled them to say several things about the character of American politics during the Gilded Age.

Throughout the nineteenth century writers and artists used images of machines to represent an intrusive force that was destroying a bucolic, agrarian world. The “machine in the garden” motif evoked a range of unsettling cultural changes associated with rapid industrialization. Locomotives disrupting peaceful pastoral settings, steamships invading the pristine wilderness, and other images of machinery disturbing and ultimately destroying settings characterized by natural harmony and beauty became stock themes in

literature and painting in nineteenth-century America. Thus when political reformers began to depict party organizations as machines, they employed an image that already represented a corrosive force capable of annihilating previously pure environments.¹³

Changes in work fueled by industrialization created another politically potent set of meanings associated with machines. Commentators in England and the United States sharply attacked the social and moral impact of factory work on laborers. Thomas Carlyle, perhaps the most significant of the English anti-machine figures, warned of men growing “mechanical in head and heart.” While such laments referred most directly to the condition of labor, they had political implications as well. Carlyle’s particular target was Utilitarianism, but he was also issuing a more general warning, in Leo Marx’s words, against “an excessive emphasis upon means as against ends, a preoccupation with the external arrangement of human affairs as against their inner meaning and consequences.” In the United States, similar complaints could be found as early as the 1820s. J.K. Paulding’s “The Man-Machine; or, the Pupil of Circumstances” criticized the social and political consequences of the factory system, particularly the rigid, dehumanizing form of labor it imposed on workers. William Henry Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Herman Melville issued similar criticisms during the 1840s and 1850s. Such complaints connected machines with thoughtless routines, the antithesis of the engaged, independent-minded citizenship necessary in a democracy.¹⁴

Though these complaints did not carry the day in the United States, even defenders of machine-based production cast doubt on the intellectual capacity of the average worker. Most Americans celebrated the rise of machinery as evidence of technical progress and the source of material abundance. Defenders of the machine

recognized the changes in the nature of work wrought by industrialization but voiced approval for them. Carroll Wright, appointed the first commissioner of the new federal Bureau of Labor in 1885, insisted that routinized factory work was a form of uplift, inducing discipline and improving morality among the otherwise slothful, dull-witted masses. Others, most notably Frederick Winslow Taylor, made similar arguments. At the base of many such claims was the Darwinian-fueled belief that the immigrants and rural migrants who constituted the bulk of the industrial labor force were inherently inferior. “The majority of human minds are weak, and slow, and could do little in the world but for simple tasks adapted to small and barren brains,” wrote an advocate of mechanized production. “Monotonous toil suits them exactly The exact and punctual habit, which the machine engenders, trains careless minds with a discipline most wholesome.” Though a defense of the impact of factory work, these arguments reinforced visions of the industrial workers who supported urban machines as incapable of meeting the standards necessary for democratic citizenship.¹⁵

By the time political reformers began to use the machine metaphor, debates over the consequences of industrialization had invested it with a range of meanings that made it an effective term of political derision. Not only did it evoke visions of a force that destroyed the purity of a virginal, harmonious America and corrupted workers, it symbolized power and permanence. The massive Corliss Engine, displayed at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, embodied the scale and power of industrial machinery, as did huge factories and powerful locomotives. Whether a beneficial or detrimental force, machines were a significant cultural presence in the United States by the end of the century. Labeling party organizations as machines ensured that they would

be seen as a force to be reckoned with, one fully capable of undermining American democracy and corrupting the American people.

Gilded Age reformers were not the first to speak of machines in a political sense. Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century politicians occasionally referred to government—both its institutions and personnel—as a machine. The word had its origins in Enlightenment thought, used as Isaac Newton had used it to describe nature in mechanical terms, as a realm governed by a distinct and coherent set of natural laws. The political institutions of a particular society worked in a complex but consistent (and thus comprehensible) manner and politics was a science devoted to understanding the processes and people that defined them. John Adams described the British constitution in 1775 as a “great machine [that] will not go any longer without the new wheel” and Thomas Jefferson wrote of “the great machine of government.” As late as the Civil War era, Abraham Lincoln spoke of “running this machine” in reference to leading the national government. The term was used in this fashion regularly to describe the U.S. Constitution during the nineteenth century—James Russell Lowell famously declared it “a machine that would go unto itself” in 1888—but the Enlightenment usage faded as the twentieth century approached.¹⁶

The decline of this morally neutral meaning roughly corresponded to the growth of a more derogatory understanding of the term, though there was a substantial period of coexistence and transition. By the middle of the nineteenth century, critiques of machine politics began to seep into the popular idiom of politics. The New York Tribune noted the existence of a “‘masheen’ party” in the city’s first ward—the phonetic spelling hinted at the working-class Irish character of the organization—in 1858. Three years later a

reformer warned of the “modern and monstrous instrument known as the political party machine” that “crushes honesty and uprightness as effectually as the wheels of the Juggernaut does its victims.” Both uses of the word underscored its novelty—as street slang and as a “modern” phenomenon in need of explanation. As late as 1871, the label “Tammany machine” appeared only a handful of times in discussions of the Tweed scandal.¹⁷

By the late 1870s, the machine metaphor had become a regular element of the Mugwump vocabulary. Their correspondence and public pronouncements routinely referred to “machines” and “machine politicians.” Definitions often accompanied early references in print. It was not simply “organization,” but “the abuse of organization which is stigmatized as the ‘machine’” declared R.R. Bowker. H.V. Boynton described the machine as “the combinations inside politics” that blocked civic service reform. Carl Schurz complained of a “kind of ‘machine politics’ which consists in mere struggles for power and plunder.” The introduction of the term also generated a virtual cottage industry in which reformers sought to explain the origins and workings of the political machine.¹⁸

The attraction of the machine metaphor stemmed from its symbolic rather than its descriptive properties, although in some respects it was an appropriate term. Party politics grew increasingly routinized and divorced from ideological considerations after the Civil War. The complexity of party operations also increased dramatically during these years. These developments were especially evident in cities, where party leaders forged increasingly elaborate organizations and the “machine” label became most closely associated with urban settings. But the suggestion of power and efficiency evoked by the

machine image was not especially accurate, particularly in reference to city politics. With the possible exception of Pittsburgh, no major urban center featured a centralized party organization that held firm control of municipal government before the 1880s. Factional conflict within parties was far more common. The machine metaphor suggested parties, especially urban parties, had established a level of power and efficiency that did not exist when the term first became popular. It was the term's utility as a social label as well as its descriptive power that made it rhetorically attractive.¹⁹

In an age of sharp labor conflict, the class implications of the machine metaphor proved especially powerful. If party organizations were elaborate mechanisms, then the men who ran them were best imagined as skilled industrial workers. Civil Service reformer George William Curtis compared party organization to a “locomotive” and labeled its leaders “drivers of the machine.” Englishman James Bryce, whose American Commonwealth was heavily influenced by his Mugwump informants, described politicians as operatives who had acquired “a familiarity with the wheels, shafts, and bands of the party machine, together with a skill in working it.” Fellow European visitor Moisie Ostorgorski, who also relied on liberal reformers in his investigation, described the “technical part” of American politics, which included developing “a knowledge of the machinery of party organization, with all its wheels within wheels.” In Solid for Mulhooly, Rufus Shapley's 1881 political satire, the title character learned, “after the manner of an apprentice,” how to operate “a political machine as complicated, as ingenious, as perfect as the works of a watch.” Much of this language flowed from the culture of urban party organization itself, which had long borrowed working-class terminology. In adopting it and publicizing it, liberal reformers sharpened the image of

urban party politics as the province of the working class, albeit a particularly skillful segment of it.²⁰

Perhaps the fullest expression of this class implications of the machine metaphor appeared in an February 23, 1884 cartoon in Harper's Weekly (Fig 4). “The Kelly Motor” portrayed then Tammany boss John Kelly operating a device labeled the “New York City Democracy.” Seated on a barrel of gin wearing overalls and a workmen’s cap as the machine runs itself, Kelly reclines against the wall reading a newspaper. The machine haphazardly spits out its products, political offices and contracts. The image neatly captures the moral failing, corruption, and absence of principles that reformers believed characterized machine politics. It also rendered Kelly, a wealthy politician who painstakingly cultivated an image of bourgeois respectability, as an indolent workingman lacking even the skill and talent implied in the images supplied Bryce and Ostorgorski.

The machine image also rendered voters insignificant. The power supply for the Kelly Motor flows from a gin mill across the street, a reminder of the moral character of the voters who kept Tammany in power. It is a disembodied image—no specific voter appears in the cartoon. Like the Harper’s drawing, most presentations of machine politics focused on leaders. Voters, if they appeared at all, were usually categorized as thoughtless dupes—“ignorant and pliable” in Bryce’s words—a description bolstered by the perception of immigrants as racially inferior.

Portraying machine politics and politicians in this manner fed a social explanation of the sources and character of urban party politics. The complexity conveyed by the machine metaphor suggested that careful analysis—not just moral condemnation—was



Fig. 4 [Source:
Harper's Weekly,
February 23, 1884]

required if reformers were to understand how American city politics worked. Machines were not small bands of greedy adventurers who despoiled municipal government but sophisticated, powerful, and permanent political devices operated by a particular class of men who capitalized on the social and political circumstances of big-city life. Mechanical imagery underscored this claim, moving reform critiques away from republican-style attacks on selfish leaders and toward condemnations of party politicians in class terms. Defining party leaders in this fashion, the rise of the machine metaphor helped open the way for explanations of political corruption that focused on groups rather than individuals.

At the core of this wider transformation was the rise of social science. Many of the mugwumps whose writings would define machine politics were closely tied to the professionalization of the social sciences after the Civil War. Influenced by Darwinism

and the profound cultural shift it wrought, they used scientific language to explain social phenomena, including politics. William Graham Sumner, popularizer of Social Darwinism in the United States, argued that American democracy was a “transient stage in social evolution” and urban machines and bosses were best understood in that context. The boss, he argued, was “the product of a long process of natural selection” and the “natural outcome” of the evolution of American democratic institutions. Less neutrally, civil service activist Dorman Eaton saw the rise of Tammany as evidence of the “degeneracy” of American urban democracy. The New York City machine, he declared, was the product of haphazard political breeding, the “mongrel union . . . between a charity society and a partisan faction for office and spoils” that contained “conflicting elements of savagery and charity.”²¹

Darwinian rhetoric became a staple of political reform discourse over the final two decades of the nineteenth century. In some cases politicians themselves were cast in these terms. Tammany Hall leader Richard Croker was a “prosimian bulk of bone and sinew—a sort of human magetherium who has come crashing up from the swamps splashed with the slime of pre-Adamite wickedness.” Shapley’s Mulhooly opened with an account of the title character’s “Paddy-Cree” that laid heavy emphasis on his Irish origins. More often, reformers stressed the racial character of the immigrant masses that backed the boss. One reformer blamed municipal corruption on an influx of “illiterate peasants, freshly raked from Irish bogs . . . Bohemian mines , or Italian robbers nests.” They were “beaten men from beaten races,” wrote another, lacking “the ideas and aptitudes which fit men to take up readily and easily the problem of self-care and self-

government, such as belong to those who are descended from the tribes that met under the oak trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chieftains.”²²

The implications of this racialization are particularly evident in the work of two of the leading observers of late nineteenth-century American public life. E.L. Godkin, the founding editor of the Nation and later editor of the New York Evening Post, was an advocate of civil service reform, an opponent of American imperialism, and a sharp critic of Gilded Age party politics. A superb writer and an acute observer of American public life, he wielded an extraordinary sway over public opinion in middle- and upper-class reform circles. William James remembered him as “the towering influence in all thought concerning public affairs” whose influence was “more persuasive than that of any other writer of the generation.” English aristocrat James Bryce produced the most important account of American political life since Tocqueville. Published in 1888 and republished numerous times, the American Commonwealth remained the standard account of American politics for a generation. Friends and colleagues, Godkin and Bryce advanced more extensive and systematic explanations of the shape and character of urban party politics than most of their contemporaries.²³

Although Godkin had written occasionally about urban public life before the 1870s, the Tweed scandal prompted his first sustained commentary on the subject. From the start he exhibited a distinctive analysis of the issue, one shared by a handful of commentators at the time. While the Times, the Committee of Seventy, and Thomas Nast generally imagined the Tweed Ring in republican terms, as the conspiracy of a handful of men working against the public interest, Godkin attempted a more original

explanation of the ring, one that centered on the group sources of the scandal and ultimately proposed more radical responses.²⁴

For Godkin, Tweed's power was better explained through political and social analysis than simply as an example of individual moral turpitude. The combination of universal suffrage and an influx of ill-bred, uneducated, and impoverished immigrants provided a mass of voters for profit-hungry "adventurers" to manipulate. The excessively complex machinery of government provided offices and opportunities for these disreputable types to exploit and the lack of "civic spirit" on the part of respectable New Yorkers allowed them to do so. Tweed's rise to power was "distinctly the result of a process of evolution," Godkin explained in 1871. Looking back in 1875 he noted that Tweed was "the product of a state of things which his overthrow would not fundamentally change...he was a Boss because the condition of the voting population and the nature of governmental machinery made Bosses inevitable." He was "an amazing villain," Godkin concluded, "but nevertheless a legitimate outcome of his time."²⁵

Godkin located part of the problem in the class stratification of New York City. The industrial development of the city had drawn a large number of people "whose main interest in life is to make sure of their daily bread for one or two weeks ahead." This created a substantial body of voters who were "ignorant and grossly corrupt." It was the power of the vote held by this "lower stratum" that allowed Tweed and those like him to run the "elaborate machine" that was New York's government. Only if "the industrious and intelligent classes" joined together to counter "the mere proletariat," he argued, could sufficient reform be enacted to make municipal governance work. Following this logic, Godkin ultimately sought to limit the franchise of the working class. As a member of the

Tilden Commission, a state body charged with addressing the problem of urban political corruption, he advocated the creation of a separate Board of Audit elected by taxpayers only. The proposition failed, but his support for it laid bare the class dimensions of his diagnosis of the Tweed Ring.²⁶

Racial and nativist assumptions also buttressed Godkin's class analysis, even before the Tweed scandal. "We all know what the source of the evil is," he declared in an 1866 discussion of municipal government: "a swarm of foreigners have alighted, ignorant, credulous, newly emancipated, brutalized by oppression, and bred in the habit of regarding the law as their enemy." This influx led directly to a decline in the quality of political leadership: "one of the results, and, perhaps, the worst, of this enormous addition of ignorant strangers to our voting population is that they have created a class of politicians formerly unknown."²⁷

The Tweed revelations reinforced this point and Godkin's commentary made its Darwinian basis clear. Noting the "fundamental evils...underlying our city government," he declared it "an incontrovertible fact that not only a large portion, but even a large majority of our population consists of foreigners, ignorant, unused to the exercise of the elective franchise, unendowed with the self-restraint and instinctive discrimination of men bred to the responsibilities of citizenship and self government." These newcomers had been "trained...to follow the leadership of the men whom we are trying to depose and keep deposed." The Irish were the chief case in point. In terms of "political development," he argued, the peasantry who made the bulk of mid-nineteenth-century Irish immigration were still in "the clan stage" and had not "passed through the same process of political and social development as the other races of Europe." In 1866,

Godkin had expressed hope for the political assimilation of the Irish in “one or two generations.” The Tweed revelations destroyed that optimism, replacing it with an evolutionary perspective that permanently relegated immigrants to subordinate status.²⁸

The presence of a large number of people lacking the intellectual and moral capacities for self-government bode ill for the prospects of democracy in urban America. In the Nation’s commentary on the Tweed scandal, Godkin repeatedly stressed the importance of moral consensus in city politics. “All successful municipal self-government,” he wrote in 1871, “has been carried on by small, homogeneous communities, animated by a strong sense of fellowship and identity of interest.” In these settings, voters were “united by the closest of ties, those created by race, religion, and history” and “their numbers were sufficiently small to make municipal acquaintance possible and give tremendous force to public opinion.” In New York City, by contrast, “the heterogeneous composition of the population” made “public opinion and public spirit weaker” and made Tweed possible.²⁹

This frank acknowledgement of the heterogeneity at work in urban settings distinguished Godkin from his contemporaries during the early 1870s. While others thundered against “rings” on behalf of the people, Godkin had largely abandoned the pretense of public unanimity. He had come to the conclusion that machine politicians and the voters who supported them had their own political ethos, one at odds with the values of respectable citizens. In part this difference was driven by class resentment. Of the boss’s “frauds and defalcations” working-class voters “care little or nothing,” he claimed, “and if they turn their minds to them at all, they look on them as legitimate fleecings of the rich.” But it had a racial basis as well. The “foreign element” lacked

“the Anglo-Saxon respect for forms and legal tradition,” he wrote privately in 1864, a sentiment he would broadcast regularly through the columns of the Nation in the wake of the Tweed controversy. Immigrants, he later claimed, had a different mental and moral make up. Produced by centuries of evolution, it rendered them unfit for citizenship in a democracy.³⁰

Godkin continued to criticize Tammany and machine politics generally and his ideas powerfully influenced reformer’s perceptions of machine rule. Nowhere was it more keenly felt than in the pages of James Bryce’s seminal account of nineteenth-century American politics, the American Commonwealth. In his several visits to the U.S. while preparing the book, Bryce relied on Mugwump reformers such as Godkin, Carl Schurz, George William Curtis, and Nation publisher Henry Villard. Godkin’s impact was especially strong. The American Commonwealth betrays the same Darwinian-fueled scientific spirit and the same class and racial prejudices that defined Godkin’s analysis.³¹

The Mugwump view was especially evident in Bryce’s account of urban party politics. Like Godkin, he eschewed expressions of moral outrage for a more careful analysis of the roots of municipal corruption. Diverse cities offered “the best soil for [the] growth” of boss politics, he argued. His rationale in support of that claim precisely followed that offered in the pages of the Nation. Along with frequent elections, numerous offices, and universal suffrage, three factors fueled municipal misrule: “a vast population of ignorant immigrants,” the fact that the bulk of the “leading men” in each city were “intensely occupied with business,” and communities so large that people know little of one another, and that the interest of each individual in good government is comparatively small.”³²

Bryce framed his analysis in the evolutionary terms of the day. Machine politics resembled nothing so much as ancient tribal or feudal relations. “The bond between the party chiefs and their followers is very close and very seldom broken,” he wrote. “What the client was to his patron at Rome, what the vassal was to his lord in the Middle Ages, that the ‘heelers’ and ‘workers’ are to their Boss in these great transatlantic cities.” Just as Godkin placed Irish voters in the clan stage of politics, so Bryce located the ethos of urban party politics in the distant past. Machines were a feudal remnant, brought to the U.S. by peasants from a culture that had not yet evolved sufficiently enough to generate independent citizens capable of functioning in a representative democracy.³³

In this context, machine politics became the product of a separate moral realm. It was not enough to condemn party politicians for rejecting or ignoring the prevailing code of ethics. They were operating within a separate, distinctive moral code. Machine politicians were not “wicked men,” Bryce insisted, but were better understood as “the offspring of a system” whose “morality” was “that of their surroundings.” Class and ethnic origins explained the behavior of party bosses. “A city boss is often of foreign birth and humble origin; he has grown up in an atmosphere of oaths and cocktails; ideas of honour and purity are as strange to him as ideas about the nature of the currency and the incidence of taxation.” “Even city politicians,” he added, “must have a moral code and moral standard. It is not the code of an ordinary unprofessional citizen. It does not forbid falsehood, or malversation, or ballot stuffing, or ‘repeating. But it denounces apathy or cowardice, disobedience, and above all treason to the party.”

In effect Bryce, like Godkin, argued that the United States had more than one political culture. Neither observer was prepared to place the code of the machine

politician on equal footing with bourgeois Victorian morality. The machine ethos was clearly inferior. It stemmed from ancient feudal and clan traditions that were inadequate and inappropriate to a modern urban-industrial society. But both claimed that respectable reformers and party politicians, along with their respective supporters, operated from separate ethical codes, a recognition that constituted a first, inadvertent step toward imagining American politics in plural terms.

Elite reformers were not the only or even the primary agents of this reconception of American democracy. In many respects, they were responding to the claims of workers, immigrants, and party politicians. But their capacity for propagating their ideas was unsurpassed and their acknowledgement, however inadvertent, of the multiple, divergent interests active in American public life was significant. It would remain for a later generation of reformers, intellectuals, politicians, and grass-roots activists to give equal legitimacy to the competing political cultures evident in the Gilded Age. But the Mugwump's recognition of that diversity ultimately helped legitimate the idea of a plural politics upon which the ethos of machine politics rested.

The rise of the machine metaphor did not cause this shift in American political thought, but it helped open the way for it. In representing party politics in as a complex, powerful phenomenon with distinct class connotations, reformers helped move critiques of American politics away from a focus on individual dishonesty and toward social analysis. The careful studies of machine politics that followed increasingly emphasized the group sources of municipal corruption and urban political conflict. The result was an

increasing consciousness of the plural character of public life in the United States, a consciousness that would become commonplace in twentieth-century America.

¹ Michael E. McGerr, The Decline of Popular Politics in the American North, 1865-1928 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); David M. Tucker, Mugwumps: Public Moralists of the Gilded Age (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998); Leslie Butler, "The Mugwump Dilemma: Democracy and Cultural Authority in Victorian America" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1997) Scott C. James, Presidents, Parties, and the State: A Party System Perspective on Democratic Regulatory Choice, 1884-1936 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 36-122. See also Gerald W. McFarland, Mugwumps, Morals, and Politics, 1884-1920 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975).

² Richard Schneirov, Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-1897 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 47-51; Peter McCaffrey, When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia: The Emergence of a Republican Machine, 1867-1933 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 17-46. Proceedings of Liberal Republican Convention, 17-18.

³ Nation, November 23, 1871. The reference to "administrative machine" employs the term machine in an older, more neutral sense. See the discussion below.

⁴ Henry Adams, "American Finance, 1865-1869," Edinburgh Review 129 (April, 1869) quoted in Kevin Pierce Thornton, "The End of Virtue: Public Morality and Individual Autonomy in America, 1865-1880" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1996), 51. On Republicanism, see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," The Journal of American History, Vol. 79:1 (June, 1992), pp. 11-38; Richard L. McCormick, "The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism," in Richard L. McCormick, ed., The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 311-356; James T. Kloppenberg, "Republicanism in American History and Historiography," Tocqueville Review XIII, no. 1 (1992): 11-38.

⁵ Histories of the Tweed Ring include Alexander B. Callow, The Tweed Ring (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Seymour J. Mandelbaum, Boss Tweed's New York (New York: J. Wiley, 1965). The Tweed Ring's significance extended well beyond New York City. It was seen as a representative example of a pervasive phenomenon. As Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper noted, Tweed's New York was "but a miniature picture of what administration, Municipal, State and National, has become, and only attracted more general attention because it is so central a point." (December 30, 1871, p. 242).

⁶ New York Times, July 10, 11, 20, 1871. Although the Times was a Republican paper, it was able to frame its attacks on the Ring in nonpartisan terms and many observers point to it as the first example of the nonpartisan reform journalism that would emerge more fully in later decades.

⁷ New York Times July 8, 28, 27, November 8, 1871.

⁸ New York Times July 16, 29,27, 1871; See also Harper's Weekly XV #757, (July 1, 1871) for the juxtaposition of Tweed and reports of the Paris Commune. On the term taxpayer and its breadth of meaning, see Mary P. Ryan, Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century, 274-275.

⁹ New York Times, July 15, 16, 17, 29, 1871. For the Times' commentary on the Orange riots and the role of the Ring in instigating them, see New York Times, July 11, 1871.

¹⁰ As Sven Beckert notes in his study of New York City bourgeois class formation, "Americans were unaccustomed to think of their country as possessing a permanent working class." As a result they lacked the ability to formulate a political language that imagined multiple class interests. See The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 176. For formulations similar to those expressed in the Times, see the anti-Tweed pamphlet Civil Rights, The Hibernian Riot, and the "Insurrection of the Capitalists": A History of Important Events in New York in the Midsummer of 1871 (New York: Baker and Godwin, 1871). On the development of a language of class in New York, see David R. Quigley, "'The Proud Name of 'Citizen' has Sunk': Suffrage Restriction, Class Formation, and the Tilden Commission of 1877," American Nineteenth-Century History 3:2 (Summer, 2002), pp. 69-92.

¹¹ Nation, November 23, 1871, p. 333.

¹² Harper's Weekly XV, #757 (July 1, 1871), p. 609.

¹³ Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America, 35th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 38-69; John F. Kasson, Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900 (New York: Grossman, 1976), Marvin Fisher, "The Iconology of Industrialism, 1830-1860," American Quarterly 13:3 (Autumn, 1961): 347-364; Arthur Alphonse Ekirch, The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York: P. Smith, 1951), Chapter 4.

¹⁴ Gerald E. Gerber, "James Kirke Paulding and the Image of the Machine," American Quarterly 22:3 (August, 1970): 738-9; Daniel T. Rodgers, The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 67; Marx, Machine in the Garden, 173, 171.

¹⁵ Trachtenberg, Incorporation of America, 70-73 and Rodgers, Work Ethic in Industrial America, 73.

¹⁶ Michael G. Kammen, A Machine That Would Go of Itself: The Constitution in American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1986), 17-19; Thomas Jefferson to William Short, November 15, 1807, Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerald W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress ([http://loc.gov/cgi-bin/query...mem/mtj:@field\(DOCID=@lit\(ws02049\)\)](http://loc.gov/cgi-bin/query...mem/mtj:@field(DOCID=@lit(ws02049)))), accessed June 6, 2002; Lincoln quotation in John S. Farmer, Americanisms Old and New: a Dictionary of Words, Phrases, and Colloquialisms (London: Thomas Poulter and Sons, 1889), 354.

¹⁷ New York Tribune, November 1, 1858, cited in A Dictionary of Americanism on Historical Principles, Vol. II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1013; New York City Herald, 11/27/65, p. 5 cited in Amy Bridges, A City in the Republic:

Antebellum New York and the Origins of Machine Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press), 37.

¹⁸ On correspondence, see Ari Hogenboom, Outlawing the Spoils: A History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865-1883 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 144, 180-181. R.R. Bowker, "Political Responsibility," Atlantic Monthly, 1880, cited in McGerr, Decline of Popular Politics, p. 54; Henry Adams, "The Independents and the Canvass," North American Review 123:253 (October, 1876), p. 429; 430, 458; H.V. Boynton, "The Whiskey Ring," North American Review 123:253 (October, 1876), p. 327; Carl Schurz, "Party Schisms and Future Problems," North American Review 134: 306 (May, 1882). See also, William Martin Dickson, "The New Political Machine," North American Review 134:302 (January, 1882): 40-51.

¹⁹ On the rise of organizational politics see Morton Keller, Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 238-288. On the lack of centralization of urban machine power see Steven P. Erie, Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 20 and John Teaford, Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1920 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

²⁰ George W. Curtis, Party and Patronage: An Address Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the National Civil Service Reform League (Baltimore: National Civil Service Reform League, 1892), 14, 15; James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, vol. II, rev. ed., (New York: MacMillan Company, 1917), 112, Moisie Ostorgorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964), 179; Rufus E. Shapley, Solid For Mulhooly: A Political Satire (New York: Arno, 1970), 62.

²¹ Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 59-60; William Graham Sumner, "Politics in America, 1776-1876," North American Review 122: 250 (January, 1876), 82-83; Dorman B. Eaton, "The Degeneracy of Tammany," North American Review 154: 424 (March, 1892), 297, 299. On the rise of social science and the Mugwumps use of it, see Mary O. Furner, "The Republican Tradition and the New Liberalism: Social Investigation, State Building, and Social Learning in the Gilded Age," in The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States eds. Michael Lacey and Mary O. Furner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 171-241; Thomas L. Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Dorothy Ross, The Origins of American Social Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Nancy Cohen, The Reconstruction of American Liberalism: 1865-1914 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²² Croker description quoted in Matthew Frye Jacobson, Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 187; Shapley, Solid for Mulhooly, 15-18, Clifton Yearly, The Money Machines: The Breakdown and Reform of Governmental and Party Finance, in the North, 1870-1920 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), 31-32; , Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 72.

²³ William James quoted in Thornton, "The End of Virtue," 110. See also William Armstrong, E.L. Godkin: A Biography (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978)

²⁴ As Kevin Thornton has shown in his perceptive account of the Nation during the era of Reconstruction, Godkin's vision of American politics and society can serve as a subtle barometer of broader transformations. During that period, Thornton contends, Godkin jettisoned traditional republican conceptions of public life for a newfound faith in laissez-faire liberalism and social Darwinism. This transformation buttressed his call for suffrage restriction through the plan of the Tilden Commission. Thornton, "End of Virtue," 106-154. Godkin was not the only reformer to see the Tweed Ring in these terms. See Callow, The Tweed Ring, 266-267; Quigley, "The Proud Name of 'Citizen'" and Charles Nordhoff, "The Misgovernment of New York, - A Remedy Suggested," The North American Review 113:233 (October 1871): 321-343.

²⁵ "The People and Municipal Government," Nation 19 (Dec. 19, 1872), 400; "The Rising Against the Ring," Nation 13 (Nov. 9, 1871), 300; "Boss Government," Nation 21 (November 4, 1875), 288; "Tweed," Nation 25 (October 18, 1877), 237.

²⁶ "Boss Government," Nation 21 (November 4, 1875), 288-289. On the Tilden Commission see Quigley, "The Proud Name of 'Citizen'" and Sven Beckert, "Democracy and Its Discontents: Contesting Suffrage Rights in Gilded Age New York," Past and Present 174: 1 (2002), 116-157. I discuss Godkin's advocacy of the Commission's proposal and its relationship to the development of his thought in "Mugwumps, Machines, and Immigrants," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians Meeting, Los Angeles, April, 2001.

²⁷ "The Government of Our Great Cities," Nation 3, Oct. 18, 1866, p. 312.

²⁸ "The People and Municipal Government," p. 400 and "The Boss's Dominions," Nation 13 (October 12, 1871); "Universal Suffrage," Nation 3, November 8, 1866, 371-372. Although Godkin himself was an Irish immigrant, he was from the island's Protestant elite rather than its Catholic majority.

²⁹ "Municipal Government," Nation 13 Sept. 21, 1871, 189; "The Overthrow of Tweed," Nation 17 (Nov. 27, 1873), 350.

³⁰ "Boss Government," Nation 21 (November, 4 1875), 288; Godkin to Charles Eliot Norton, March 10, 1864 in William M. Armstrong, ed. The Gilded Age Letters of E.L. Godkin (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1974), 13. "The Bosses' Dominions," 236.

³¹ Edmund S. Ions, James Bryce and American Democracy, 1870-1922 (New York: Huamnities Press, 1970); Hugh Tulloch, James Bryce's American Commonwealth: The Anglo-American Background (Wolfeboro, NH: The Boydell Press, 1988); David C. Hammack, "Elite Perceptions of Power in the Cities of the United States, 1880-1900: The Evidence of James Bryce, Moisei Ostorgorski, and their American Informants," Journal of Urban History 4:4 (August, 1978): 398.

³² Bryce, American Commonwealth, vol. 2, 114, 103; For comparison, see "The People and Municipal Government," Nation 19 (December 19, 1872), 400.

³³ Bryce, American Commonwealth, 117-118.